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ROBERT S. PEABODY FOUNDATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGY

# ANNUAL REPORT

1947

PHILLIPS ACADEMY

Andover, Massachusetts



January 5, 1948

Dr. Claude M. Fuess  
Clerk of the Board of Trustees  
Phillips Academy  
Andover, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Fuess:

Ten years or more have passed since the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology was reorganized, its museum modernized, and the present program initiated. By 1936, if not before, it was believed that if the Peabody Foundation was to be a valuable department of Phillips Academy, it should define its objectives and inaugurate a program which would eventually attain them. It was believed that there was little value in modernizing and reorganizing unless provisions were made enabling the Foundation to take its rightful place in the scientific field which was its major interest, i.e. archaeology. As a consequence of this the Foundation would obviously develop to a point where it could render a service to the community in which it was located. It is interesting to note that an analogous opinion has been voiced by the President of the American Museum of Natural History in his annual report for 1947.

Briefly stated, the staff of the Peabody Foundation recognized the fact that as an archaeological museum the Foundation had a number of obligations to the Academy, to the community in which it is located, and to the whole field of American Archaeology. Outwardly, and extremely superficially, a museum is a building in which materials are exhibited for the education and amusement of visitors. In order to perform this service properly, the staff of a museum must do an untold amount of basic work, the most important aspect of which is often described by the overworked term "research." High standards of accuracy must be maintained in exhibitions, publications, and other tangible products





which a museum places before the public. Furthermore, as knowledge grows, results of work in scientific fields such as archaeology modify conclusions, and it is most essential that the staff of a museum keep abreast of such progress.

Between 1936 and 1938 the Foundation remodeled its building so that the important collections which it houses might be seen to better advantage, or used by visiting archaeologists who were interested in them, and also, so that the staff could work more efficiently with the material which it had.

Concurrently, the Foundation embarked on a program of research. It did not seem advisable to define this program too rigidly: experience has shown the wisdom of this decision. In general terms, it was agreed that the Foundation should devote the limited resources which it had available to the study of the prehistory of northeastern North America. As the primary feature of this program, the excavations to be mentioned below were undertaken; publication of results has followed most of these, and manuscripts are being prepared to cover the work on which no publications have yet been issued. A second feature of the program was the active joining of the Foundation with other anthropologists in the development of the whole field of archaeology. It was believed, and it has proved to be the case, that it was essential for the Foundation to collaborate with other organizations for the purpose of speeding the progress of the science as a whole. A third factor was the inclusion of non-professional interests in the main objectives of the program. As a direct consequence of this policy, the Foundation may count the organization of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, actively furthered here, and the support, in theory at least, of the Eastern States Archaeological Federation.

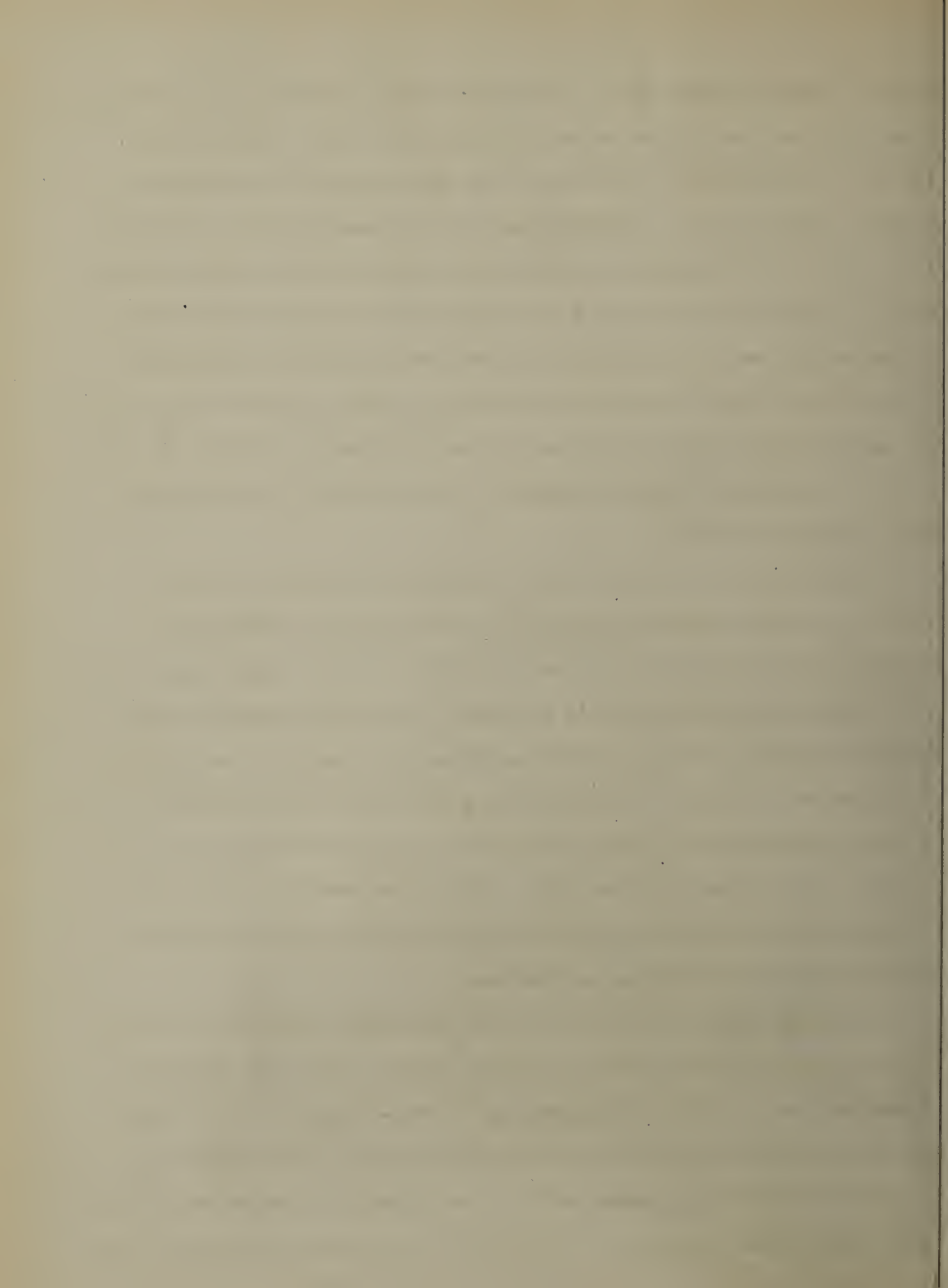
The staff of the Foundation can look back with considerable satisfaction to the progress made during the year 1947. Only the lack of resources has



prevented a greater contribution. The program which had been laid out was profoundly modified, and in some cases interrupted by the war. Not until this year has it been possible to take up in full the work which was dropped early in 1942. There has been a marked increase in the research program. This will help to place the archaeology of northeastern North America on a more stable footing. It may be said that your Foundation is now the acknowledged leader in undertakings which will eventually unravel the prehistory of New England. It will require careful and aggressive planning in order to maintain this leadership and to accomplish the desired results most efficiently. It will also be necessary to maintain freedom of operation so that the staff may take full advantage of every opportunity.

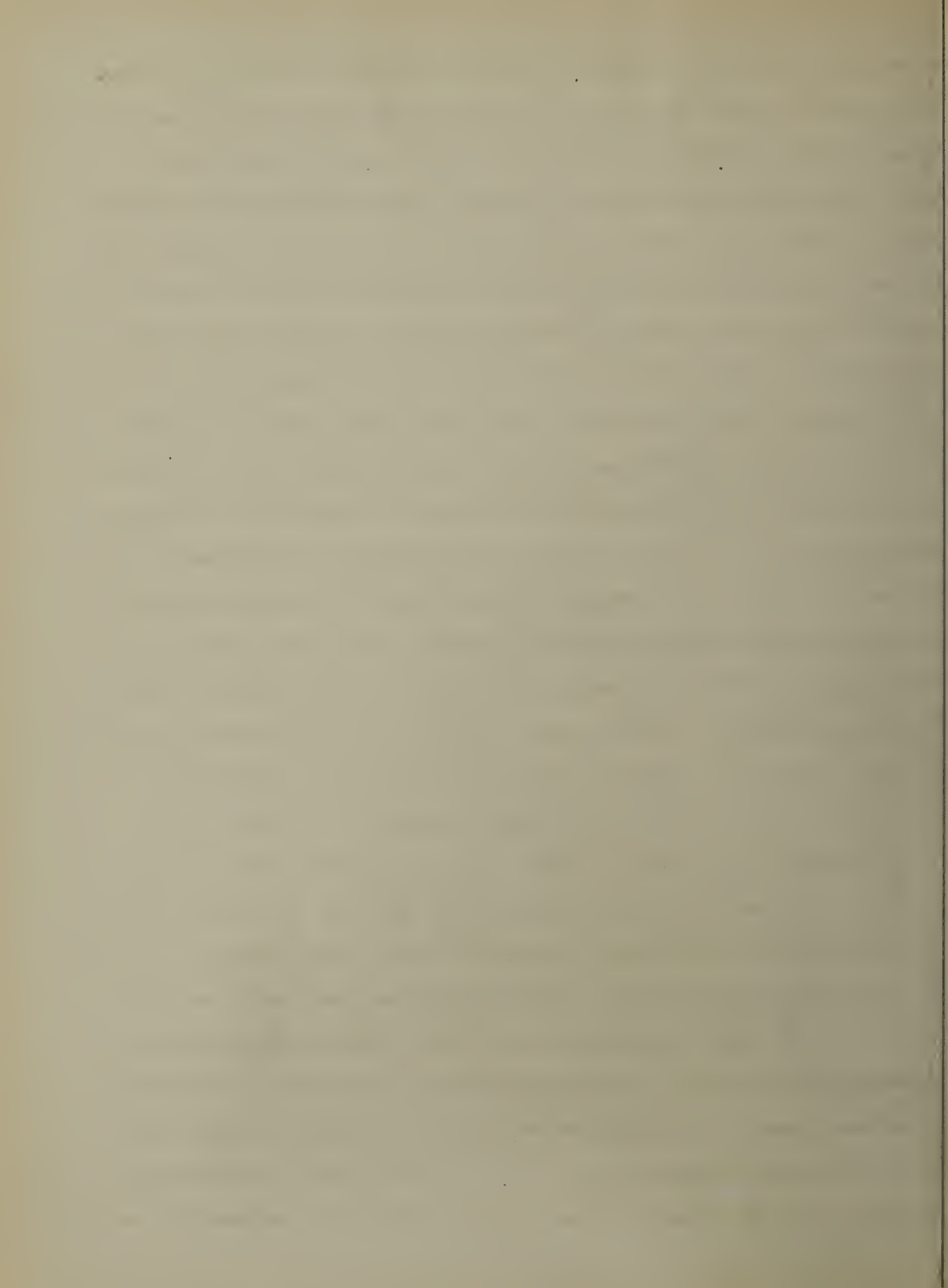
At the outset of our active work in the field, we were faced with theories and widely circulated postulations concerning the prehistory of New England that were, to say the least, somewhat nebulous. Excavations carried on by previous investigators had in some cases been clearly designed for the purpose of securing more loot, either for purposes of display in museums, or for ostentatious boasting. It appears that many of the earlier workers entered the field with preconceived ideas of what should and what should not be found. As a result, their eyes were frequently blind to the possibility that prehistory in New England was intimately connected with the swelling tides of cultural development which washed across the continent.

The program of excavation on which the Foundation embarked was designed to gather information rather than specimens. Careful control and recording of observations was a necessary requisite. During three seasons of field work in Maine the data which were gathered pointed more and more convincingly to the fact that the prehistory of Maine could be tied in with the prehistory of the Middle West, and New York State, as worked out by other men, and that the lives



of the prehistoric Maine Indians had changed in response to stimuli, probably coming from the south and west. At this point, field work in Maine came to a temporary halt. Meanwhile, chance and the cooperation of an alert amateur archaeologist, Dr. Henry F. Howe, of Cohasset, (P. A. 1922) led the Foundation into an entirely new and very profitable field. You will recall that in 1939 Dr. Howe called our attention to the fact that the deep excavation for the building of the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company in Boston adjoined the region where stakes of an Indian fishweir had been found in 1913. You will also recall that Mr. Johnson undertook a study of the stakes which were eventually re-discovered. The resulting publication, in 1942, marked a milestone in American Archaeology for it demonstrated that extensive collaborative techniques could, as they had in Europe, be applied to conditions in the New World. The work of some eleven experts analyzing peat, pollen, silts, diatoms, foraminifera, the stakes themselves, and other features resulted, among other things, in the postulation of an early date for the occupation of the Boston Basin. 1700 B. C. was announced, and the variations which depended upon the acceptance or rejection of one or the other of two collaborators were quoted. Subsequently some persons have suggested the age more nearly approximated 5000 years.

The study of the Fishweir gave rise to problems which have to do with changes in the level of the sea with respect to the land. Mr. Johnson has been actively gathering anthropological data which bear on these problems. In collaboration with him, scientists are approaching the same problems in many different ways. This work led to the publication, in August, 1947, of "Grassy Island; Archaeological and Botanical Investigations of an Indian Site in the Taunton River, Massachusetts," by Frederick Johnson and Hugh M. Raup, Papers of the Robert S. Peabody Foundation, Vol. I, No. 2. In this paper, Mr. Johnson and Dr. Raup, of the Department of Botany, Harvard University, have employed archae-





ological, botanical and geological analyses in order to establish the history of a bit of land that is now under water and uninhabitable at all except low tides. Johnson and Raup have concluded that the gravel knoll on which Indians once camped became untenable for occupation at about 1200 A. D., and that sea level is rising on the land in that region at a rate of about a foot a century. In connection with the investigation of conditions surrounding the submergence of the site on Grassy Island, Mr. Johnson and Dr. Raup have also made preliminary studies of a submerged Indian village site that was found below peat beds in Marion Harbor.

In the spring of 1946, excavations for the foundation of the addition to the building of the John Hancock Life Insurance Company uncovered sediments and fishweir stakes similar to those exposed beneath the New England Mutual Life Insurance building. A project designed to add to, and perhaps complete the work published in 1942 was inaugurated. Analyses will be completed in the early spring of 1948 by five scientists. When their results are at hand, Mr. Johnson will begin compilation of the final report. It is a pleasure to report that the Viking Fund has generously contributed \$1,000 to meet expenses of the work which could not be borne by our budget.

Development of methods of collaboration among several scientific fields has produced a number of significant and interesting results. It has been demonstrated that while specific details may remain of significance to a limited field, in combination they contribute to the solution of problems of much greater scope. Discussion of the theoretical background of the collaborative approach led to the conclusion that if ever such methods were to be tested in a new and untried territory, that bordering the recently opened Alaska Highway was the most strategic in which to try it. A cooperative reconnaissance, involving archaeology, botany, and geology, was laid out for the summer of 1944.





In many ways this project was experimental. Soundness of approach was proved by finding archaeological remains where none had been discovered before -- remains, quite probably of the camp refuse of people migrating into the New World.

Botanical and geological work contributed to important hypotheses concerning concurrent development of land forms, vegetation, and human occupation which were propounded following these discoveries.

Discussion of these hypotheses has continued. During 1947, Mr. Johnson and Dr. Raup came to the decision that it was wise, if not indeed necessary, to follow up the reconnaissance with a season of concentrated work in a restricted area. An archaeological, botanical, and geological expedition was projected under the joint sponsorship of the Peabody Foundation and Harvard University. Requests for funds have resulted in grants of \$10,000 from the Viking Fund, \$4,700 from the American Philosophical Society, \$2,000 from the Peabody Foundation, and \$1,000 from a fund in Harvard University. An application to the Arctic Institute of America for \$2,000 is still being considered. It is expected that the expedition will go out in May, 1948.

With the opening of the season of 1947, Mr. Johnson was in touch with members of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society who had discovered the site of what was believed to be the village of Titicut, occupied by Wampanoag Indians, and visited by Stephen Hopkins and Edward Winslow on June 21, 1621. It was hoped that work here would result in finds of European material, and that these, in turn, would provide a date for remains of Indian manufacture which could not otherwise be properly placed in the time scale.

Preliminary analysis of the finds made by Dr. Johnson for the Foundation disclosed the fact that there had been an occupation of the site prior to the historic and proto-historic occupation. It appeared that this earlier occupation had occurred at a time so remote that the climate varied markedly from that which



we enjoy at present. It further developed that there might be an opportunity to tie the earlier occupation in with phenomena believed to be associated with the retreat of the glacial ice from New England. Research on the problem in collaboration with Dr. Kirk Bryan, of the Department of Geology of Harvard University, is designed to marshall all the evidence bearing on the occupation of the site.

At the opening of the 1947 season, Mr. Byers was in touch with Mr. Wendell S. Hadlock of the Abbe Museum, Bar Harbor, Maine. Mr. Hadlock, in common with the Foundation, is seeking good evidence which will place the pre-history of northern New England on a firm foundation. It was agreed that by pooling the limited resources of both institutions far greater progress would result. Accordingly it was concluded that the Abbe Museum and the Peabody Foundation would put a joint expedition into the field. It was agreed that the Abbe Museum would have the right to such information as it deemed to be important to its work, and to a representative collection of archaeological specimens.

During six weeks spent on Wasp Island, in the Union River, near Ellsworth Falls, Maine, the expedition uncovered evidence of three different levels of occupation, representing three different periods during which the island had been inhabited. Much more work remains to be done, including a study of the geology of the basin of the Union River, yet at this time it appears safe to say that this work will go far to provide the key to the chronology of this part of Maine. In spite of the fact that a number of seasons more must be spent gathering data, we are well on the way to setting the house in order.

The activities of the Foundation have been reviewed in order to demonstrate that it plays an active part in the archaeological field. It has been said a great many times that no scientific organization can continue a healthy



existence if it ceases to work actively in its field. Once such work ceases, degeneration and eventual decline set in very promptly. If your Foundation is to maintain its place, it is essential that it continue active participation in field work and in the accompanying research. In so doing, it will contribute to knowledge and spread still further the name of Phillips Academy, already known wherever American Archaeology is known.

At the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, held in Ann Arbor in May, 1947, Mr. Johnson was elected President, succeeding Mr. Byers. Mr. Johnson has also been elected to the Committee on Standards and Surveys of the National Council of Historic Sites and Buildings. This Committee will be asked to advise the Executive Board of the Council regarding standards that ought to govern the selection of the historic site and building projects to be supported by the Council and the proposed National Trust.

Mr. Johnson continues as Secretary of the Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains which is sponsored by the Society for American Archaeology, The American Anthropological Society and the American Council of Learned Societies. The Committee has been endorsed by the National Research Council and the Social Science Research Council. The objective of the Committee is to represent the field of Anthropology in making certain that archaeological remains threatened with destruction by the construction of Federal multi-purpose dams are salvaged. The Committee has aided in the development of an extensive Federal archaeological program. The work of the Committee is varied. Last spring when appropriations for the program were in jeopardy, Mr. Johnson testified on behalf of the Committee before the Senate Committee on Appropriations. It has also been necessary for him to consult with government officials in Washington, Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska, and elsewhere concerning matters of policy and concerning development of administrative procedures which will result in the most efficient





and effective means of attaining the desired scientific results. The work of the Committee has been of inestimable value to American Archaeology and to other disciplines affected by the program.

In the spring, Mr. Johnson was asked by Mr. Edward Rogers, of Lincoln, Vermont, and Mr. Murray Rogers, of Methuen, Massachusetts, for guidance. They had planned a canoe trip through central Quebec and wished to increase the pleasure of the undertaking by doing work which might be useful. As a result they conducted an archaeological reconnaissance of Lakes Mistassini and Albanel and brought back with them the first collection of archaeological specimens to be taken out of the region. These have been presented to the Peabody Foundation. Mr. Johnson and Edward Rogers are now working on a report which will discuss the significance of the collection; it is hoped that this will be completed and submitted for publication in the spring.

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Byers continue to maintain close relations with the Massachusetts Archaeological Society. Mr. Byers, is the Editor of the Society. The Society was founded at a meeting in Peabody House in March, 1939. A vote of the Executive Committee, passed at their meeting in December, expressed the wish of the Society to return to Peabody House in April, 1949, to celebrate their tenth birthday. If possible, it will be well worth our while to maintain close relations with this group whose potentialities for work in the field of archaeology in New England have scarcely been tapped.

The value of the Museum and of the collections it houses is most satisfactorily demonstrated by the fact that archaeologists come here to study them. This fall Dr. Gordon Willey, of the Smithsonian Institution, and Mr. John Goggin, of Yale University, made an extensive study of our collections from Florida. Dr. Richard S. MacNeish, University of Michigan, also spent some time gathering information from our northeastern materials. It is expected, also, that Dr. Waldo





Wedel of the U. S. National Museum will do the same with our valuable collection of Mandan Indian material. Before the war others had made plans to inspect the collections from the Etowah site in Georgia and other important materials which are now available in Andover. As is the duty of any museum, we must continue to provide facilities for such work.

In the not too distant future, definite plans for extensive re-arrangements of the exhibitions must be made. Those now on view, particularly in the hall devoted to northeastern archaeology, must be brought up to date. Modernizing archaeological exhibitions is an expensive procedure, more so than in almost any other field. Means will have to be provided for securing the temporary services of a technician, for the purchase of modern display cases and for remodeling the hall itself.

The library continues to grow at a reassuring rate and is becoming an increasingly valuable reference library for persons working in fields of early history or prehistory of northeastern North America. We have been accumulating all reports of early travelers and explorers so that we now have a considerable body of source material, much of it in the most reliable editions. During the year we have accessioned twenty-four titles acquired by purchase, and have purchased several more which have not yet been accessioned because of lack of time. In addition we have accessioned forty-six titles which had been previously received in exchange or by subscription. We now maintain exchange agreements with seventy-three institutions, of which a number are in countries in Europe, South America, Central America, or in Canada. Our publications may be consulted in their libraries.

During the year the museum collections were increased by eight accessions, covering more than a thousand individual specimen numbers. In addition, we have Mr. Johnson's collection from Titicut, totalling 822 specimens, and the collec-



tion from the Abbe Museum - Peabody Foundation dig at Wasp Island, on the Union River. Neither of these has yet been catalogued because of the lack of adequate help.

This winter the time of the staff will be chiefly devoted to working up material already in hand, and to making preparations for another season in the field. A manuscript report of an archaeological survey of the Shawsheen River Valley and of excavations in a shell heap near Ipswich, Massachusetts, is being prepared for the press by Mr. Byers. The work was done by Mr. Ripley P. Bullen, who for some years has been given office space here and occasionally sponsored in his work, although he has no official connection with the Foundation. Mr. Byers' prime objective is the completion of study and analysis of data and collections secured in Maine during the seasons of 1936, 1937, and 1938. Mr. Johnson, who continues his work with Mr. Edward Rogers on collections brought back from Lakes Mistassini and Albanel, is primarily engaged in the study of collections obtained at the Titicut excavation during the summer. In addition he is now making active preparations for his departure for the Yukon during the late spring.

With Mr. Johnson in the Yukon, and Mr. Byers continuing the work at Wasp Island in Maine, the resources of the Foundation will be stretched to the utmost to the furthering of knowledge in its field of archaeology. The summer should be as profitable as it will be busy.

Respectfully submitted,

*Douglas S. Byers*  
Douglas S. Byers, Director

